

Critical Links

When preparing W-2s, be sure to use correct names and Social Security numbers, in the correct format to make sure your employees get credit for their earnings.

The name and Social Security number are critical links connecting your W-2 data to each employee's lifelong earnings record. The name and number must match Social Security's records. And, they must be entered on the W-2 in the correct format.

Common errors

Here are the most common W-2 errors:

- Incorrect name or number
- Incorrect format
- Misspelled names
- Nicknames or shortened names
- Using titles before or after the name
- Names not reported to Social Security
- Not using hyphens with compound names

Payroll records

Update your payroll records by asking employees to verify their name and Social Security number before you close out your books and prepare W-2s. If a name has changed, continue to use the old

name until the employee has obtained a new Social Security card with the new name.

Using a new name without updating Social Security's records may prevent posting of earnings.

Employees should report name changes to Social Security by calling toll-free, **1-800-772-1213**.

Notifying the company is not enough. The employee must notify Social Security to update the permanent record.

Free verification service

Social Security will verify employee names and numbers for W-2 purposes.

Phone verification

To verify up to five names and numbers call Social Security's toll-free line, **1-800-772-1213**.

Local Social Security office

Contact your nearest Social Security office for verifications of up to fifty employee names and numbers.

Large volume requests

Requests for more than fifty verifications are processed at Social Security's main computer center. Call the Verification Hotline for details, 410-965-7140.

W-2 name format

Enter the name and Social Security number as they are shown on the employee's Social Security card. The name shown on the card will match the employee's permanent record.

Use names only

Use the first name, middle initial (unless there is no middle name) and last name.

Don't use titles, such as Mr., Ms., Dr., Capt. Don't add suffixes, such as RN, MD, PhD, CLU. Avoid using Jr. and Sr. after the last name. Titles, prefixes and suffixes make it difficult for Social Security's computers to match the name with the permanent record.

Compound names require a hyphen

Parts of compound names must be connected with a hyphen. Don't separate them with a blank space or join them into a single word. Here are some examples:

Susan B. Smith Johnson should be entered on the W-2 as: Susan B Smith-Johnson

Maria Mercedes Sancho Davila should be entered on the W-2 as: Maria M Sancho-Davila

Jose Ramon Lopez Gonzales should be entered on the W-2 as: Jose R Lopez-Gonzales

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Ivan Ramirez Arellano (no middle name) should be entered on the W-2 as: Ivan Ramirez-Arellano

Juana Garcia y Vega (no middle name) should be entered on the W-2 as: Juana Garcia-y-Vega

Single-letter prefixes.

Single-letter prefixes such as O or D must not be separated from the rest of the surname by a blank, but should be connected by an apostrophe or joined to the rest of the surname.

Grace H. O'Malley may be entered on the W-2 as: Grace H O'Malley or Grace H OMalley

Anthony D'Angelo (no middle name) may be entered on the W-2 as: Anthony D'Angelo or Anthony DAngelo

Common name prefix exception

The following common name prefixes do not require a hyphen to link them to a name. SSA's computer software recognizes the prefixes and expects to find a name attached to them.

DA DE DI DO DU EL LA
LE LFLI LO MC MT ST
BON DEL DER LAS LOS
MAC MTE SAN STA STE
VAN VER VON DELA
VANDE VONDE VONDER
VANDER

The above prefixes do not require a hyphen but if one is used it will not hinder processing the W-2 nor posting wages to the person's earnings record. For example:

Majed S. El Alami may be entered on the W-2 as: Majed S El Alami or Majed S El-Alami

Susan R. Di Bello may be entered on the W-2 as: Susan R Di Bello or Susan R Di-Bello

However, compound surnames incorporating the above prefixes must use a hyphen for all parts of the compound surname.

Catherine L. Smith Le May should be entered on the W-2 as: Catherine L Smith-Le-May

Gloria M. Rodriguez de Perez should be entered on the W-2 as: Gloria M Rodriguez-de-Perez